Melvin Edwards

Works

My first ideas for connections were formed in about 1963. I was at a place involved in cinematic visual and physical explorations in outer space. I picked my own head for possibilities and came through with a chain, rod and welded steel combination that connected the corner of a room and the ceiling. This piece was included in a one man show at the Santa Barbara museum in 1965. I have always understood the brutalist connotations inherent in materials like barbed wire and links of chain and my creative thoughts have always anticipated the beauty of utilizing that necessary complexity which arises from the use of these materials in what could be called straight ahead formal works. Linear geometry having its purity complicated because one chooses to exploit the flexibility of the wire. A geometric organization appearing to be something else now you see it now you don't.

The modifier, the changer, the move, the column of barbwire. The connections on the floor were shown before with the back to back Pyramid Up and Down Pyramid at the Studio Museum in 1969, modifying floor and corner in order to corner concepts before I passed them without making them real.

How long is a chain? How long is a change?
How heavy is a chain? How heavy is a change?
How long is a heavy connection?
Is a connection as flexible as a chain?
Is a connection as flexible as a change?

B.wire has a long history in war both as obstacle and enclosure. B.wire has a long history in agricultural life both as obstacle and as enclosure. Wire like most linear materials has a history both as obstacle and enclosure but barbwire has the added capacity of painfully dynamic and aggressive resistance if contacted unintelligently. To use this chain with all its kinetic parts criss-crossing the line as invader and potent container.

This line wire barb thing changing perception
This line wire barb thing changing definition
This line wire barbed thing having connotations

Changing chains having weight having graphic connotations making definite forms having history contained in this place now pulling walls together being lit by the spirit of those who are with me and the quarter of a quadrilateral pyramid shadowing other possibilities.

My use of art as a life to work past the confines of any set of classifications and conditions is a critical attempt at this point in history, for all systems have proven to be inadequate. I am now assuming that there are no limits and even if there are I can give no guarantees that they will contain my spirit and its search for a way to modify the spaces and predicaments in which I find myself.

Melvin Eugene Edwards, Jr.
2/70

William T. On M. E.

(Barbwire) A linear movement with a secondary rotational symmetrical movement and counter perpendicular rotational wrap module. With every linear descriptive, massless drawing there is a simultaneous symmetrical modular movement. (S.M.M.)

a. S.M.M.—Nonsymmetrical linear descriptive mass (Non S.L.D.M.)
b. S.M.M.—Symmetrical linear descriptive mass (S.L.D.M.)
therefore:

S.M.M.—Non-S.L.D.M.
Or
S.M.M.—S.L.D.M.

William T. Williams

Melvin Eugene Edwards, Jr.

Born Houston, Texas, May 4, 1937. Studied Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles County Art Institute, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Southern California (B. F. A.), 1965. Taught at several California institutions and several times held the post of guest lecturer, including Cornell University and University of Delaware. Received seven grants and awards including John Hay Whitney Fellowship, 1964. Currently teaching at University of Connecticut, Storrs. Resides in New York City. One-man exhibitions at Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1965; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1968; Barnsdall Art Center, Los Angeles, 1968. Group exhibitions include: *Annual,* La Jolla Museum of Art, 1962; *Five Younger Los Angeles Artists,* Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1965; *Thirty Contemporary Black Artists,* The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and subsequent tour, 1968; *5 + 1,* Art Gallery, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1969; *X to the 4th Power,* Studio Museum, New York, 1969. Represented in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Bernadino Valley College, San Bernadino, California; Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

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Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10021
Telephone: (212) 249-4100